

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 10153 232312Z

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-03

INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 SP-03

CIEP-03 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PA-04 USIA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6311

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EIND, PINR

SUBJECT: CESSATION OF WEYERHAEUSER OPERATIONS IN COTABATO

1. WEYWEHAUSER OFFICIAL REPORTS AS ALLUDED TO IN AP WIRE AUGUST 22, THAT ON AUGUST 6 A WEYERHAEUSER BUS TRANSPORTING 25 WORKERS AND VILLAGERS AT COMPANY'S COTABATO (NOW SULTAN KUDARAT) LOGGING CONCESSION WAS AMBUSHED (ACCORDING SOURCE POSSIBLY MIXED MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN). BY A GROUP OF ABOUT 30 ARMED MEN, TWENTY-ONE PASSENGERS WERE KILLED. LOGGING OPERATIONS HAVE CEASED, AND EMPLOYEES ARE PRESSING TO BE EVACUATED. CONCESSION IS LOCATED 40-50 MILES SOUTH OF LEBAK AND IS ACCESSIBLE ONLY BY SEA.

2. COMPANY HAD HAD SECURITY PROBLEMS IN PAST, AND WHENEVER ARMED BANDS WERE SIGHTED IN VICINITY, SOURCE STATES PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROVIDE AS MUCH AS 4-5 PLATOONS OF TROOPS. NOW ACCORDING WEYERHAUSER SOURCE, HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED ONLY TWO PLATOONS, WHICH NOT SUFFICIENT TO INDUCE WORKERS TO RETURN TO WOODS.

3. COMPANY BELIEVES LACK OF TROOP SUPPORT REFLECTS

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PAGE 02 MANILA 10153 232312Z

FACT THAT GOVERNMENT HARD-PRESSED ELSEWHERE AND NOT WILLING TO REDUCE FORCES AT LEBAK TO GARRISON

CONCESSION. GOVERNOR HAS URGED COMPANY TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS, BUT COMPANY FEARS IT MUST ABANDON AREA UNLESS GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE TROOPS. IT HAD APPROACHED EMBASSY FOR ANY ASSISTANCE THAT MIGHT BE PROVIDED IN ENCOURAGING PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PROTECTION. WEYERHAEUSER STATES THAT ABANDONMENT OF CONCESSION WOULD AFFECT 580 FILIPINO WORKERS, 2 AMERICANS, ALMOST 3000 DEPENDENTS, AND PLANT WORTH \$2.2 MILLION.
SULLIVAN

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